

Dear friends and colleagues,

## **We Still Need to Talk**

Some of you will already have seen the [short statement](#) released via our social media on 24 October 2023 to confirm that the symposium, 'We Still Need to Talk: Towards a Relational Culture of Remembrance,' has been cancelled by our institutional partner, the [bpb](#) (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung / Germany's Federal Agency for Civic Education). We include that short statement at the end of this letter for those who have not yet seen it. The purpose of this letter is to provide additional information to those who would have contributed to the symposium (and the community that supported us along the way), as well as to answer some of the questions that you have addressed to us since the cancellation was made official by the bpb on 24 October:

## **The Mechanics of the Cancellation**

Firstly, we'd like to make clear that the symposium was put together by the two of us (Candice Breitz and Michael Rothberg) in close partnership with Peggy Piesche and Iris Rajanayagam of the bpb. For avoidance of doubt, although we have worked tirelessly with the bpb on this symposium for the better part of a year—and despite the considerable time and labour we have invested—we were not granted an opportunity to discuss its cancellation with Thomas Krüger (the president of the bpb) in advance of the e-mail that he sent out to all confirmed participants to announce the cancellation (on 24 October). As of 31 October 2023, we have yet to have had any direct contact at all with Krüger (since the beginning of the working process), despite having requested an exchange more than once as of realising that the cancellation was imminent. The decision to cancel is one that we never supported and continue to strongly oppose (for reasons elaborated on further below). This is an important detail that the bpb has deliberately neglected to mention in their communications with the panellists and the public thus far.

We furthermore wish to be absolutely clear in saying that we have not been party to (nor were we given the chance to review or approve) any of the written communications that the bpb has released about the symposium since 24 October 2023, including [the current statement on the bpb website](#) (which, to the best of our knowledge, has not been translated into English). Nor were we afforded even the basic dignity of being copied in on either of the recent e-mails that the bpb has sent out to the symposium community (the first from Krüger to nearly 40 symposium participants; the second from the bpb to over 200 people who had registered to attend the symposium). It would appear that our opinions—as partners of the bpb in convening this symposium—no longer bear relevance as of 7 October 2023.

## **Additional Information about the Symposium and its Participants**

Given that the bpb has removed all previously published content about the symposium from its website (as of cancellation), many of you have written to request access to this information. Two documents included along with this letter provide the symposium description, as it was published on the bpb website (one in German, one in English). The third additional document that we are providing, offers descriptions of the seven panels that were planned for the symposium (this content was still in the final stages of being reviewed, and had not yet been published or translated into German).

Several of you have also written to request a list of the speakers who were scheduled to contribute to the symposium. As the bpb website had at one point included a list of confirmed speakers (a list that was later deleted from the website), the names of most of our speakers have already been in public circulation. For the sake of transparency—and in order to give you a concrete sense of the opportunity that was lost when the symposium was cancelled—we can confirm that the following speakers had committed to participating prior to 7 October 2023:

Julia Yael Alfandari, Manuela Bauche, Karima Benbrahim, Omri Boehm, Manuela Bojadžijev, Mirjam Brusius, Ibou Coulibaly Diop, Asal Dardan, Emily Dische-Becker, Sultan Doughan, Fatima El-Tayeb, Elke Gryglewski, Noa K. Ha, Anna Hájková, Hanno Hauenstein, Moshtari Hilal, Alena Jabarine, Sarah James, Ari Joskowicz, Susanne Knittel, Hanno Loewy, Ralf Michaels, Edwin Nasr, Esra Özyürek, Peggy Piesche, Iris Rajanayagam, Isidora Randjelović, Ben Ratskoff, Stefanie Schüler-Springorum, Eric Otieno Sumba, Natan Sznaider, Ana Teixeira Pinto, Margarita Tsomou, Sinthujan Varatharajah, Charlotte Wiedemann, Michael Wildt, Veronika Zablotsky, May Zeidani Yufanyi and Jürgen Zimmerer.

Other potential speakers who we had approached prior to cancellation (people who could not accept our invitation or who had yet to reply to us at the time that the symposium fell through) include René Aguigah, Patrick Bahners, Micha Brumlik, Judith Butler, Joseph Croitoru, Dan Diner, Aruna D'Souza, Anselm Franke, Raphael Gross, Eva Menasse, Rijn Sahakian, Nahed Samour, Zoé Samudzi, Michael Sfard, Sibylle Steinbacher, Eyal Weizman, Mirjam Zadoff and Raef Zreik.

We would additionally like to confirm that Edwin Nasr (they/them) contacted us to withdraw from participation in the symposium on 12 October, prior to the formal announcement of the symposium's cancellation—on the basis of a clear understanding that their presence among the symposium panellists would be likely to undermine the symposium and its participants. Without wishing to erase the complex, fraught and violent histories that have created the conditions for a wide range of excessively hasty and insufficiently considered responses to the current carnage that is unfolding in Israel/Palestine, we use this opportunity to emphatically distance ourselves from the callous Instagram story that Nasr shared via their Instagram account on 8 October (one that has long since been deleted). We could not have predicted Nasr's Instagram story, nor do we in any way condone its contents. For those seeking additional insight, Nasr has recently issued [a statement of clarification](#) via their Instagram account. Although it should not be necessary for two Jewish intellectuals to publicly pronounce their condemnation of Hamas, times are such that we feel the need to do so unequivocally; as well as to denounce the unspeakable violence and death visited upon more than a thousand innocent Israeli civilians on 7 October 2023.

Conversely, it should also go without saying that we do not believe that the horrific violence exacted by Hamas on 7 October provides justification for the intensely disproportionate and brutal bombardment that is currently being visited upon over two million innocent civilians in Gaza. That state-sanctioned violence has already taken many thousand Palestinian lives and has been accompanied by repulsive racist rhetoric and atrocious genocidal threats from Israeli politicians and military authorities. Nor do we believe that responses to Hamas's repugnant and unjustifiable attacks can afford to ignore the context of the preceding decades of severe and inhumane oppression to which Palestinians have been subjected by the Israeli state. Our most profound desire is for an immediate ceasefire, a return of all hostages and political prisoners, and the initiation of negotiations that might eventually lead to justice and equity for all in the region. As intellectuals located remotely from the violence that Israelis and Palestinians are

experiencing, we view it as our priority to foster and nurture spaces for discussion, debate and critical analysis—a modest goal to which we had hoped our symposium would contribute.

## Never the Right Time

For those who have asked, we offer a short history of the cancelled symposium below:

1. Some of you will have noticed that the title of our symposium references an earlier series of events that was titled, '[We Need to Talk! Art – Freedom – Solidarity](#).' This series, which was to have taken place in the lead-up to Documenta Fifteen in May 2022, sought to bring participants into conversation around Germany's historical responsibilities, focusing particularly on "the role of art and artistic freedom in the face of rising antisemitism, racism, and Islamophobia." The talks were ultimately [prevented from going ahead](#). Documenta's [website](#) uses the following language to explain their cancellation: "**At this moment**, Documenta's intended goal for **the series of talks**—to open a multi-perspective dialogue beyond institutional frameworks in the run-up to Documenta Fifteen—**is unfortunately not realizable**. It is important to Documenta that the thread of this conversation not be cut off" [the bold emphasis is ours]. We consider it relevant, here, to point out that conditions were relatively quiet in Israel/Palestine at the point that this symposium was shut down.

2. In February 2022—with the support and encouragement of the Visual Arts Section of the [Akademie der Künste](#) in Berlin—we (Candice Breitz and Michael Rothberg) set out to curate a symposium that might productively intersect with some of the questions that we expected the Documenta series to address. When the Documenta talks were suspended in May 2022, we saw it as all the more urgent to create space for public conversations that we continued to regard as relevant and pressing (although we had not been personally involved in the Documenta programming). In this spirit, we titled our symposium-in-planning, 'We Still Need to Talk: Towards a Relational Culture of Remembrance.' Our partners at the Akademie der Künste worked closely with us to set aside dates, a location and an appropriate budget for the symposium, which we went about preparing in good faith, having been given assurances that our efforts were strongly supported and would be valued. We had been working towards this symposium for the better part of a year when, in early December 2022, the symposium was hastily and summarily vetoed by the senate of the Akademie der Künste. As explanation for the cancellation of the symposium, we were told—in the vaguest of terms—that the senate felt "**it was not the right time**" for the symposium to take place. We were refused further written explanation or a follow-up conversation with the senate. Our requests for tangible feedback that might lend deeper insight into the swift decision (which was taken during a meeting lead by Jeanine Meerapfel, the president of the Akademie der Künste) went completely ignored. We again consider it relevant, here, to point out that conditions were relatively quiet in Israel/Palestine at the point that this symposium was vetoed.

3. The thinking we had done towards this second cancelled series of public conversations was soon after to become the basis for a third effort to convene a symposium that would address the questions at stake, this time in partnership with the bpb ([Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung / Germany's Federal Agency for Civic Education](#)). In early January 2023, the bpb unexpectedly reached out to us to explore the possibility of resurrecting the symposium that had been cancelled by the Akademie der Künste. The federal agency seemed, at the time, like an ideal partner for the endeavour. As a government organ, the bpb is responsible for promoting the understanding of political issues among inhabitants of Germany, to the ends of strengthening democratic awareness and nurturing the will of citizens to exercise their political agency. We were encouraged by the bpb's commitment to the content that we remained keen to explore. We began intense preparations towards a new incarnation of the symposium, in

tight dialogue with our partners at the bpb (Peggy Piesche and Iris Rajanayagam), who kept Thomas Krüger informed throughout the process of preparing the symposium. We recycled the title of the previously cancelled symposium, 'We Still Need to Talk,' feeling that this simple phrase was fast gaining in urgency.

Our preparations would continue until mid-October 2023, at which point most of the speakers had confirmed their participation. The symposium was to take place at the [Futurium](#) in Berlin from 8-10 December 2023. Many symposium participants had returned signed contracts to the bpb. The symposium had been formally announced on the bpb's website. In advance of any significant efforts being made to create publicity for the symposium, public enthusiasm was already such that we had almost arrived at full audience capacity for the event within a few weeks of the symposium being announced on the bpb website. On 17 October, we were told that the symposium would be cancelled, despite our objections. On 24 October, Thomas Krüger (the president of the bpb) wrote to all would-be participants announcing the cancellation, "in light of the current situation in Israel and Gaza." Participants were told that the bpb currently, "see[s] **no possibility of holding an event in this form at the present time**," claiming that, "the necessary basic and security conditions are currently not given for a constructive debate within the framework of the planned symposium which would be gainful for the discourse on cultures of remembrance in the German context." In the same e-mail, participants were told that, "The bpb considers a multi-perspective, nuanced exchange, as well as reflection on the topics and issues raised in the symposium in a transnational and interdisciplinary framework to be extremely important for civic and historical-civic education." The bpb e-mail hinted somewhat vaguely—as did the Documenta website at the time that 'We Need to Talk' was cancelled; as did the senate of the Akademie der Künste at the time that the first incarnation of 'We Still Need to Talk' was cancelled—towards an abstract point in the future at which it might finally be appropriate to host "a nuanced exchange" on the questions and issues that the symposium set out to address, a future point at which it might finally, finally be "the right time" to talk.

## The Narrowing German Public Sphere

The range of public events and gatherings that has been cancelled in Germany since the brutal Hamas attacks, makes it clear that our symposium could never have survived after 7 October 2023. Taking this into account (along with the aforementioned series of cancellations we had personally experienced during considerably quieter times in Israel/Palestine), we have no choice but to arrive at the conclusion that it seems never to be "the right time" to discuss and debate the limitations of Germany's *Erinnerungskultur* (memory culture)—at least, in the eyes of [institutional decision-makers and political gatekeepers](#) in the German context. The multiplying instances of 'postponement' and cancellation, which extend far beyond the examples provided in this letter, are becoming—in our view—increasingly ominous in their implications. They point to [a troubling pattern that cannot be ignored](#). The recurring suffocation of critical discourse addressing the ongoing processing of Germany's violent past—as exemplified by the impossibility of bringing our symposium to fruition—must be understood as going hand in hand with [other equally troubling repressions](#) that have become increasingly common in the German public sphere in recent years. Viewed against the backdrop of the country's shifting demographics—as well as in relation to the growing and entangled threats of antisemitism, Islamophobia and various racisms that contemporary Germany is facing—we view the diminishing space for discursive events addressing questions that remain relevant and urgent, as an extension of the disturbing and ongoing crackdown on [public life](#) and [non-violent political expression](#) in Germany, a crackdown that certainly predates the Hamas attacks of 7 October 2023, yet has dramatically intensified subsequent to that date. An expanded reflection on the current condition of the German public sphere—as a range of basic civilian rights that

are constitutive of democratic society come under increasing erosion—is available in [an open letter that has been signed by a hundred Jewish artists, writers and scholars based in Germany](#) (the letter is available in German at this [link](#)). We support the contents of this letter and view its concerns as being closely aligned with our own.

Bringing together a broad spectrum of intellectuals, scholars, activists, artists and historians to convene in dialogue around the continuing impact of the German past on its present—as we had hoped to do with ‘We Still Need to Talk’—has become virtually impossible in today’s Germany. This despite the vile public rhetoric and growing parliamentary presence of the AfD (a far-right party that has expanded at an alarming rate on the basis of rabidly racist and anti-refugee messaging). This despite the growing support for a proliferation of right-wing movements that are collectively responsible for the ongoing normalisation and mainstreaming of hate-fuelled public discourse. While white supremacists, neo-Nazis and ethno-nationalists ([some casually wearing the Star of David as an accessory](#)) continue to have their rights to political expression protected by the German state ([marching the streets of Germany under police protection](#)), forums for discursive exchange between intellectuals, scholarly experts, artists and other cultural workers, are increasingly precluded.

### **Towards Multidirectional Solidarities**

We’d like to conclude by expressing our gratitude for the intense solidarity that so many of you have extended to us upon finding out about the most recent cancellation of ‘We Still Need to Talk.’ Many friends and colleagues have reached out to offer to try and provide an alternate venue for the symposium. Given the cost and complexity of putting a symposium of this nature together, as well as our current state of mental exhaustion, we are doubtful that the full symposium will be able to take place within the foreseeable future, though we can imagine organising an online forum or a physical gathering on a smaller scale. We are considering our options and will be in touch should any viable alternatives emerge.

Though we do not assume that you all share the views expressed in this letter, we encourage those who do, to spread the news and keep the conversation going when it comes to these and many other cancellations. Should you feel moved to do so, consider writing to Thomas Krüger and the bpb directly to share your opinions and/or objections (several who are receiving this letter have already taken the time to do so, which is very much appreciated).

Despite the cruelty and grimness of the moment that we are all living through, we remain invested in the prospect of creating space for difficult but necessary conversations, in the necessity of advancing the discourse pertaining to memory culture, and in the crucial role that public dialogue can play in guaranteeing a robust and healthy public sphere. As the number of civilian deaths in Israel and Palestine grotesquely approaches ten thousand—and at a moment that is as intensely fraught, painful and polarised as the one we are collectively experiencing—creating space for exchange and discussion grows all the more intensely urgent. As Ralf Michaels (one of the symposium’s panellists) put it in a recent letter to Thomas Krüger, “Sprechen ist ja kein Luxus für friedliche Zeiten, es ist eine Notwendigkeit für schwierige Zeiten.” [“Talking is not a luxury for peaceful times; it is a necessity for difficult times.”]

We Still Need to Talk. Now more than ever.

With warm regards,

Candice Breitz and Michael Rothberg  
Berlin/Los Angeles, 31 October 2023

The short statement below was published via our [social media](#) on 24 October 2023:

## **STATEMENT FROM CANDICE BREITZ AND MICHAEL ROTHBERG**

"We Still Still Need to Talk"

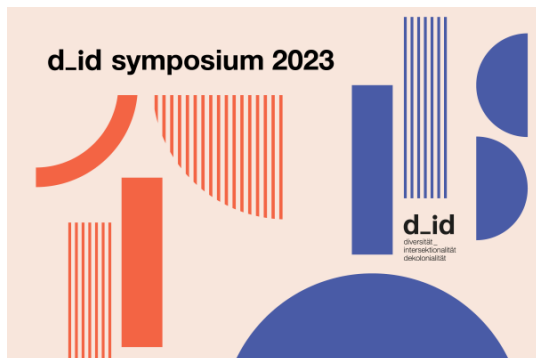
With great disappointment and frustration, we must confirm that 'We Still Need to Talk: Towards a Relational Culture of Remembrance,' the symposium that was scheduled to take place in Berlin from 8-10 December 2023, has been cancelled by our institutional partner, the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (Germany's Federal Agency for Civic Education), very much contrary to our wishes. We find it short-sighted and regrettable to cancel a symposium that was to focus discussion on crucial questions related to genocide, political violence, antisemitism, racism and the strengthening of intersectional solidarities, at the very moment in which such conversations – no matter how difficult – are more necessary and urgent than ever. 'We Still Need to Talk' would have featured nearly forty speakers – scholars, journalists, curators, artists and activists – who possess deep expertise in understanding and confronting violence, prejudice, and inequality, in the context of both the present and the past. It is a bitter irony that our speakers have been prevented from entering into public dialogue at a time of horrific violence in Palestine and Israel, as well as in light of a related and escalating crisis in the public sphere in Germany itself.

This short statement is intended only to clarify the circumstances surrounding the cancellation of the symposium. A longer statement will be released in days to come. We are convinced, more than ever, that We Still Need to Talk.

Candice Breitz and Michael Rothberg  
Co-convenors of 'We Still Need to Talk'

# We Still Need to Talk

## Towards a Relational Culture of Remembrance



**08.12. – 10.12.2023**



**from 03:00 pm**



**To be announced**



**Download event** [Link:

<https://www.bpb.de/bpbapi/event/download?nid=541171>]

## About the event

In the 1980s, civil society activists in West Germany developed a culture of remembrance premised on taking responsibility for the Nazi genocide of European Jews. These grassroots efforts transformed Germany's memorial landscape, defining commemoration of the Shoah as central to post-war German identity. As such initiatives achieved broad recognition in the reunified Germany of the 1990s and 2000s—and eventually came to form the basis of state-sanctioned 'memory culture' (Erinnerungskultur)—the German model was celebrated internationally as exemplary in its approach to redressing an extremely violent history. At the core of this model are an understanding of the Holocaust as a singular and unprecedented

historical event, and the embrace of responsibility for the genocide of Jews as an unavoidable element of national identity.

While the German approach to coming to terms with the National Socialist past remains widely admired, a lively public discussion about some of its central tenets has taken place over recent years. Scholars, activists, journalists and cultural workers have—in particular—debated how best to understand the relationship between the Shoah and other deeply traumatic histories, not least the violence of colonialism. Such conversations have raised the question of how adequately the German model can respond to multiple incidents of historical violence—not only those perpetrated against Jews, but also those perpetrated by the Nazi regime against non-Jewish victims, as well as those perpetrated by the German state before and after the Shoah. Critics have suggested the value of exploring alternative models of remembrance that might be able to register the magnitude and specificity of the Shoah, while nevertheless allowing meaningful space for rigorous consideration and commemoration of other German trajectories of violence; historical events such as the Nazi-perpetrated genocide against Roma and Sinti people (also known as the ‘Porajmos,’ the ‘Pharrajimos,’ or the ‘Samudaripen’), or the Ovaherero/Nama genocide that took place in what is now the country of Namibia between 1904 and 1908 under German colonial rule (to name but two examples).

Equally central to the German model is a conception of antisemitism as an absolutely distinct form of hatred. Parallel to the discussion of the Holocaust’s uniqueness in the last few years, there has also been interrogation—involving Jewish and/or Israeli voices, among others—of whether antisemitism should be understood as unique in its workings or, rather, as entangled with other forms of violent prejudice, such as anti-Black and anti-Asian racisms,

racism against Sinti and Romani communities, Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian biases (both historically and in the present). Alongside a variety of scholarly approaches to such questions, a robust public debate has emerged, spurred on by the introduction of competing definitions of antisemitism—the most well-known of which are the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s ‘working definition’ and the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism. At stake in the debate pertaining to the specificity of antisemitism are both the notion of ‘Israel-related antisemitism’ (Israelbezogener Antisemitismus), and implications for the current and future politics of Israel and Palestine.

A third thread of discussion in recent years involves the question of whether the German model of coming to terms with the past—as it was consolidated in the wake of reunification—remains adequate for the diverse, post-migrant society that Germany has become since 1945. Teachers and educators at memorial sites have raised the question of whether and how Germany's memory culture, as it is currently constituted, can be relevant to a contemporary society that includes migrant, post-migrant and diasporic communities carrying legacies from other parts of Europe, Asia, the Middle East and Africa; many of whom are not historically implicated in the Shoah and bring with them their own experiences of political violence and trauma. While there is consensus (outside of right-wing and/or ethno-nationalist movements) regarding Germany's continuing responsibility with respect to the Holocaust, there is also a call for reflection on how the culture of remembrance might evolve to serve an increasingly plural German population.

This symposium seeks to explore these related questions about the German model of memory culture. In order to open up multivalent ways of coming to terms with the past and the present, the symposium will bring together a broad range of speakers who offer relational approaches to the

history, memory and ongoing legacy of the Holocaust. It will invite reflection on the interwoven histories of various victims of the Nazis (Jews, Sinti and Roma, Eastern European civilians, Black people, queer communities, those considered disabled or mentally ill, etc.). It will consider the relationship between National Socialist violence and other traumatic histories perpetrated by the German state. It will probe the ethics of relating to the suffering of others, with particular attention to debates around works of art that endeavour to represent traumatic histories; and will invite discussion regarding what it means to be 'implicated' in violent histories that are not one's own. It will provide space to efforts to better understand the relationship between antisemitism and other prevalent forms of hatred, considering the ongoing normalization of right-wing ideology within political discourse in Germany and beyond. Without seeking to impose a singular model of coming to terms with the past, the symposium responds to an increasingly widespread sense of urgency regarding the need for a relational culture of remembrance and intersectional forms of solidarity.

Curatorial team: Candice Breitz, Michael Rothberg, Iris Rajanayagam and Peggy Piesche.

The full programme (GER./EN.) will be available here soon.

**Organizer:**

Federal Agency for Civic Education/bpb

**Target group:**

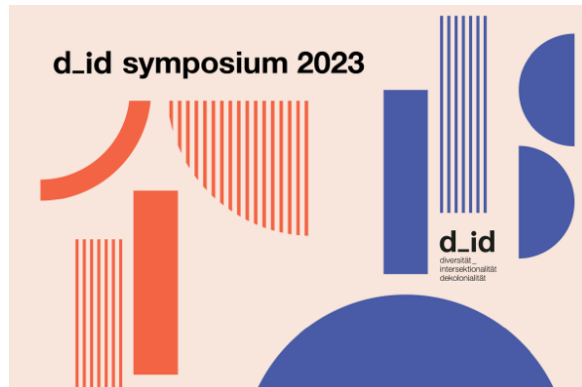
Prospective) historians, actors in (historical-)civic education, interested members of the public

**Press contact:**

Journalists please contact the press office [[Link: https://www.bpb.de/die-bpb/presse/503649/pressekontakt/](https://www.bpb.de/die-bpb/presse/503649/pressekontakt/)].

# We Still Need to Talk

Hin zu einer relationalen Erinnerungskultur



→ Programm [Link:

<https://www.bpb.de/veranstaltungen/veranstaltungska/still-need-to-talk/?programm=1>]



08.12. – 10.12.2023



ab 15:00 Uhr



Berlin



**Termin herunterladen** [Link:

<https://www.bpb.de/bpbapi/event/download?nid=540851>]

## Über die Veranstaltung

Der deutsche Ansatz zur Aufarbeitung des Holocaust hat international große Bewunderung erfahren, doch in den letzten Jahren hat sich eine lebhaftere öffentliche Diskussion über einige der zentralen Grundsätze dieses Modells entwickelt.

Als Beitrag zu dieser Diskussion wird *We Still Need to Talk* zum Nachdenken über die miteinander verwobenen Geschichten verschiedener Opfer des Nationalsozialismus anregen, die Beziehung zwischen dieser Gewalt und anderen traumatischen Geschichten Deutschlands untersuchen, die Ethik und Ästhetik des Umgangs mit dem Leiden anderer ergründen und versuchen, die Beziehung zwischen Antisemitismus und anderen verbreiteten Formen des Hasses angesichts der zunehmenden Normalisierung rechter Ideologie im politischen Diskurs in Deutschland und darüber hinaus besser zu verstehen. Vor diesem Hintergrund reagiert das Symposium auf ein zunehmend verbreitetes Gefühl der Dringlichkeit hinsichtlich der Notwendigkeit einer relationalen Erinnerungskultur und intersektionaler Formen der Solidarität.

Das Symposium wurde kuratiert von Candice Breitz und Michael Rothberg mit Iris Rajanayagam und Peggy Piesche.

In den 1980er Jahren entwickelten zivilgesellschaftliche Aktivist\*innen in Westdeutschland eine Erinnerungskultur, die auf der Übernahme von

Verantwortung für den nationalsozialistischen Völkermord an den europäischen Jüdinnen\*Juden beruhte. Diese basisdemokratischen Bemühungen veränderten die deutsche Erinnerungslandschaft und definierten das Gedenken an den Holocaust als zentralen Bestandteil der deutschen Nachkriegsidentität. Da solche Initiativen im wiedervereinigten Deutschland der 1990er und 2000er Jahre breite Anerkennung erfuhren – und schließlich die Grundlage einer staatlichen Erinnerungskultur bildeten – wurde das deutsche Modell international als beispielhaft für die Aufarbeitung einer äußerst gewalttätigen Geschichte gepriesen. Der Kern dieses Modells ist ein Verständnis der Shoah als einzigartiges und beispielloes historisches Ereignis und die Übernahme von Verantwortung für den Genozid an den Jüdinnen\*Juden als unvermeidliches Element der nationalen Identität.

Während der deutsche Ansatz zur Aufarbeitung der nationalsozialistischen Vergangenheit nach wie vor weithin bewundert wird, hat in den letzten Jahren eine lebhaftere öffentliche Diskussion über einige seiner zentralen Grundzüge stattgefunden. Wissenschaftler\*innen, Aktivist\*innen, Journalist\*innen und Kulturschaffende haben vor allem darüber debattiert, wie die Beziehung zwischen dem Holocaust und anderen zutiefst traumatischen Geschichten, nicht zuletzt die Gewalt des Kolonialismus, am besten verstanden werden kann. Solche Debatten haben die Frage aufgeworfen, wie gut das deutsche Modell auf multiple Gewaltgeschichten reagieren kann – sowohl auf die des Nationalsozialismus, als auch auf die durch den deutschen Staat vor und nach der Shoah begangene Gewalt. Kritiker\*innen haben auf die Notwendigkeit hingewiesen, alternative Modelle des Gedenkens zu erforschen, die in der Lage sein könnten, sowohl das Ausmaß und die Besonderheit des Holocaust zu erfassen als auch einen sinnvollen Raum für eine gründliche Diskussion und das Gedenken an andere deutsche Gewalttaten zu schaffen, die die Nation weiterhin verarbeitet: historische Ereignisse wie der Völkermord an den Sinti\*zze und Roma\*nja (auch bekannt als "Porajmos", "Pharrajimos" oder "Samudaripen") oder der Ovaherero/Nama Genozid, der im heutigen Namibia unter deutscher Kolonialherrschaft im frühen zwanzigsten Jahrhundert stattfand, um nur zwei Beispiele zu nennen.

Ebenso zentral für das deutsche Modell ist die Auffassung von Antisemitismus als einer absolut eigenständigen Form des Hasses. Parallel zur Diskussion über die Einzigartigkeit des Holocausts in den letzten Jahren wurde auch – unter Beteiligung vieler jüdischer und/oder israelischer Stimmen – die Frage gestellt, ob Antisemitismus als etwas Einzigartiges oder als verwoben mit anderen Formen des Rassismus, wie antimuslimischer Rassismus, anti-Schwarzer Rassismus, Rassismus gegen Sinti\*zze und Roma\*nja, antiasiatischer Rassismus und andere Formen von Rassismen verschiedener Art, sowie antipalästinensischen Vorurteilen, in der Vergangenheit als auch in der Gegenwart betrachtet werden sollte. Wissenschaftler\*innen haben sich diesem Thema aus vielen Perspektiven – sowohl historisch als auch theoretisch – genähert, während gleichzeitig eine öffentliche Debatte entstanden ist, nachdem konkurrierende Definitionen von Antisemitismus eingeführt wurden – die bekanntesten sind die Arbeitsdefinition der International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance und die Jerusalemer Erklärung zum

Antisemitismus. In den Debatten über die Besonderheit des Antisemitismus, geht es oft um die Frage des israelbezogenen Antisemitismus und seine Beziehung zur Politik in Israel und Palästina.

Ein dritter Diskussionsstrang der letzten Jahre betrifft die Frage, ob das deutsche Modell der deutschen Vergangenheitsbewältigung – wie es sich nach der Wiedervereinigung gefestigt hat – für die diverse, postmigrantische Gesellschaft, zu der sich Deutschland in den letzten Jahrzehnten entwickelt hat, gut geeignet ist. Lehrer\*innen und Pädagog\*innen in Gedenkstätten haben die Frage aufgeworfen, ob und wie die deutsche Erinnerungskultur, in ihrer derzeitigen Form für eine Gesellschaft relevant sein kann, zu der zunehmend migrantische, postmigrantische und diasporische Communitys gehören, die ein Erbe aus anderen Teilen Europas, Asiens, des Nahen Ostens und Afrikas mitbringen; viele von ihnen sind historisch nicht in den jüdischen Völkermord verwickelt und bringen ihre eigenen Erfahrungen mit politischer Gewalt und Traumata mit. Während jenseits rechter und rechtsnationalistischer Ideologien ein breiter Konsens über die fortdauernde Verantwortung Deutschlands in Bezug auf den Holocaust besteht, wird zunehmend darüber nachgedacht, wie sich die Erinnerungskultur im Dienste einer sich stetig pluralisierenden deutschen Bevölkerung weiterentwickeln könnte. Obgleich niemand gegen die Wahrung der deutschen Verantwortung für den Holocaust argumentiert, werfen communitybasierte Erinnerungskulturen in Deutschland zwangsläufig auch Fragen nach der unterschiedlichen Art und Weise, in denen die Mitglieder dieser Gesellschaft sich mit der globalen Geschichte der Gewalt in Beziehung setzen auf.

Dieses Symposium möchte genannte Fragen zum deutschen Modell der Erinnerungskultur untersuchen. Um multivalente Wege der Aufarbeitung von Vergangenheit und Gegenwart zu eröffnen, wird das Symposium eine Reihe von Referent\*innen zusammenbringen, die relationale Ansätze zur Geschichte, der Erinnerung und dem fortdauernden Erbe des Holocausts anbieten. Es wird zum Nachdenken über die miteinander verwobenen Geschichten der verschiedenen Opfer des Nationalsozialismus einladen (Jüdinnen\*Juden, Sinti\*Zze und Roma\*nja, Schwarze Menschen, Queere Menschen, Osteuropäer\*innen, usw.). Es wird die Beziehung zwischen der nationalsozialistischen Gewalt und anderen traumatischen Geschichten, die vom Deutschen Staat verübt wurden, betrachtet. Es werden die ethischen Aspekte des Umgangs mit dem Leiden anderer – mit besonderem Augenmerk auf Debatten um Kunstwerke, die versuchen traumatische Geschichten darzustellen untersucht, und wird zur Diskussion darüber einladen, was es bedeutet, in eine gewalttätige Geschichte "verwickelt" zu sein, die nicht die eigene ist. Es wird den Bemühungen um ein besseres Verständnis der Beziehung zwischen Antisemitismus und anderen Formen des Hasses angesichts der zunehmenden Normalisierung von rechter Ideologie im politischen Diskurs in Deutschland und darüber hinaus Raum geben. Ohne zu versuchen ein bestimmtes Modell der Vergangenheitsbewältigung aufzwingen zu wollen, entspringt das Symposium einer Dringlichkeit der Notwendigkeit einer multidirektionalen Erinnerungskultur und intersektionale Formen der Solidarität.

Kuratorisches Team: Candice Breitz, Michael Rothberg Iris

Das vollständige Programm (Dt./Eng.) wird in Kürze hier verfügbar sein.

**Veranstaltungsadresse:**

Berlin-Mitte (der konkrete Veranstaltungsort wird noch bekannt gegeben)

**Veranstalter:**

Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung/bpb

**Zielgruppe:**

(Angehende) Historiker\*innen, Akteur\*innen der (historisch-)politischen Bildung, interessierte Öffentlichkeit

**Pressekontakt:**

Journalistinnen und Journalisten wenden sich bitte an die Pressestelle  
[Link: <https://www.bpb.de/die-bpb/presse/503649/pressekontakt/>]

**Anmeldung:**

Teilnahmegebühr: keine

Der gesamte Veranstaltungsort, inklusive der WCs ist mit Rollstuhl erreichbar. Im Rahmen der Veranstaltung wird durchgängig sowohl englisch/deutsche Lautsprachenverdolmetschung, als auch Übersetzung in deutsche Gebärdensprache angeboten. Das Symposium wird live gestreamt. Bitte beachten Sie bei Ihrer Teilnahme die Veranstaltungsordnung der bpb [Link: [https://www.bpb.de/system/files/dokument\\_pdf/bpb\\_Veranstaltungsordnung.pdf](https://www.bpb.de/system/files/dokument_pdf/bpb_Veranstaltungsordnung.pdf)]

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Was wurde aus den jungen Zeugen der Shoah? Rebecca Clifford wendet sich den Biographien und schmerzlichen Erinnerungen von Menschen zu, deren biografische Wurzeln durch den Holocaust gekappt wurden.

### 67. Bundesweites Gedenkstättenseminar 2023

[Link: <https://www.bpb.de/veranstaltungen/veranstaltungs kalender/519854/67-bundesweites-gedenkstaettenseminar-2023/>]



27.06. – 30.06.2023



ab 18:00 Uhr



Hamburg

## SEVEN PANELS

**Friday, 8 December:**

### 1. We Still Need to Talk

In recent times, several works of art have served as catalysts/proxies for urgent and volatile debates that are of broad relevance to the socio-political contexts out of which the works have emerged and/or in which they are exhibited. The opening panel of the symposium will look back at four such cases—Dana Schutz's *Open Casket* (Whitney Biennial, 2017), Forensic Architecture's *Cloud Studies* (Whitworth Gallery, 2021), Jean-Jacques Lebel's *Poison soluble* (Berlin Biennale, 2022) and Taring Padi's *People's Justice* (Documenta 15, 2022). It will then open onto a deeper discussion of whether and how works of art that seek to address traumatic histories can or should meaningfully 'regard the pain of others' (Susan Sontag), bearing in mind the multi-perspectival reception that such works can reasonably expect to receive.

**Saturday, 9 December:**

### 2. Entangled Relations among Nazi Victims

Research and writing on the violent policies of the National Socialist state have focused overwhelmingly on the Shoah—the Nazi genocide of Jews. Yet Jews were one of a number of groups targeted for persecution (and even annihilation) during the twelve years of Nazi rule. How might it be possible to dignify the history and memory of these different victim groups without undermining the singularity of any of their particular experiences? This panel will bring together scholars dedicated to exploring multiple histories of violence between 1933-1945, with a particular focus on the intersection of the persecution of Jews, Sinti and Roma, Eastern European civilians, Black people, queer communities, and those considered disabled or mentally ill.

### 3. Germany's Legacies of Violence

For the last two decades, scholars have heatedly debated how best to articulate the relationship between the Holocaust and other histories of violence in which Germany has been implicated. Positions that argue for a continuity between German/European colonialism and the Nazi genocide of Jews have been particularly contested. Yet even those who reject the strong claim for a link between 'Windhoek' and 'Auschwitz,' must grapple with the impact of the colonial production of race and space on Nazi ideology; and with the multidirectional entanglements of the Holocaust's legacies with those of colonialism, slavery and processes of decolonization. Without presupposing a singular way of approaching the topic, this panel will be dedicated to exploring the multiple ways in which the Holocaust and other traumatic histories might enter into relation—in history and in memory.

### 4. "Menschen mit Nazihintergrund" / Material Continuities in a Postmigrant Society

By means of a conversation that was broadcast via Instagram Live in February 2021, Moshtari Hilal and Sinthujan Varatharajah unleashed a broad-reaching debate about the ongoing presence and influence—in the German public sphere—of family wealth that can be partially (or fully) traced back to the Nazi era, particularly within the realm of cultural patronage. In applying the descriptor 'Nazihintergrund' to those who continue to benefit from such legacies (as a counterpoint to the descriptor 'Migrationshintergrund,' which is often assigned derogatorily), Hilal and Varatharajah sought to observe and mark such material continuities, in the interests of a more transparent cultural landscape. Their intervention additionally sought to address the complex imbrication of racialized Germans (those who do not carry a 'Nazihintergrund') in the increasingly diverse nation's ongoing struggle to work through its past (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*). Considering the multiplicity of traumatic histories that scar the German past and present, what is remembered—and by whom?

**Sunday, 10 December:**

## **5. Antisemitism, Islamophobia, Racism: Where Hate Intersects**

Recent years have seen polarizing controversies not only around how best to define antisemitism, but also about how to conceptualize its relationship to various other forms of prejudice and hatred. To be sure, hatred of Jews has a long history that precedes the codification of racial categories in modernity. Yet over the past 150 years, antisemitism has emerged in an explicitly racial idiom that urges us to consider its proximity to anti-Black, anti-Asian, anti-Roma, Islamophobic and anti-Palestinian forms of violence, among others. Is antisemitism a *sui generis* form of prejudice or is it one instance of a larger category of racism? Not simply a matter of scholarly dispute, this question has implications for various urgent political concerns. How, for example, do we make sense of the increasingly frequent leveraging of accusations of antisemitism against critics of Israeli policy? How do we account for the indiscriminate conflation of Jews, Muslims, People of Colour and migrants by far-right terrorists (in the case of an incident like the Halle synagogue attack, to name but one horrific example)? Such questions have been passionately debated in the German context and addressed in recent publications such as the 'Anti-Antisemitismus' issue of [Texte zur Kunst](#) (Issue No. 119, September 2020), [Streitfall Antisemitismus](#) (2020) and [Frenemies](#) (2022). This panel invites scholars and activists who are engaged with multiple forms of hatred to illuminate this complex historical and present-day landscape.

## **6. The Politics of Analogy**

The question of which historical analogies and comparisons are permissible in contemporary Germany, has been central to the debate that is commonly referred to as the 'Historikerstreit 2.0.' This has created a chasm between historical scholarship (in which comparisons are a crucial tool in understanding the past), and the public debate in Germany since 2020 over comparisons between the Holocaust and colonial crimes; as well as between Israel and apartheid-era South Africa. The applicability of the term 'apartheid' to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, has especially been at the centre of many heated controversies in recent years. Some have used the term as an analogical reference to the South African regime's policies of racial segregation (1948-1994). Others have insisted, rather, that it be applied as a category of international law (one that describes the institutionalisation, particularly at the level of the state, of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over other racial group/s, with the intention of maintaining the governing regime). A broad constituency continues to dismiss either of these uses of the term, insisting that any usage of it in the context of Israel/Palestine is inaccurate and damaging. Within the German public sphere, the way in which the term is applied, as well as the question of whether the term can legitimately be applied at all, has fomented significant polarisation. This panel seeks to create space for discussion of the fraught triangular relation between Germany, Israel/Palestine and South Africa at a time when the very mention of the term 'apartheid' can quickly paralyse discursive exchange.

## **7. Towards Multidirectional Solidarities**

To what extent is it possible to preserve and honour the specificity of different lived experiences while simultaneously building solidarities with those who have travelled different paths? Within the increasingly polarized public sphere, it has become habitual for thinkers on both sides of the political spectrum—the right and the left—to characterize Black feminist concepts such as 'identity politics' (Combahee River Collective) and 'intersectionality' (Kimberlé Crenshaw) as leading to a dead end for progressive politics. Given the interlocking and interwoven nature of various oppressions, however, are the politics of identity really at odds with radical visions of solidarity? Rather than focusing on 'identity politics' or 'intersectionality' per se, this panel will consider the rich potential of multidirectional solidarities.